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THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 26, 1912, IN PHILADELPHIA, PA., AT THE THIRTIETH ANNUAL
MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION
BY CHARLES HALL GRANDGENT

THE DARK AGES

The *Century Dictionary* gives the following definition: "The *dark ages*, a period of European history, beginning with or shortly before the fall of the Roman Empire of the West (A. D. 476), marked by a general decline of learning and civilization. It was introduced by the great influx of barbarians into western Europe in the fourth and fifth centuries known as the wandering of the nations, and is reckoned by Hallam as extending to the eleventh century, when a general revival of wealth, manners, taste, and learning began, and by others to the time of Dante in the thirteenth century, or later." This last extension we may well leave out of account; for to apply the term "dark" to the century that saw the greatest scholar, the greatest theologian, and the greatest poet of our Christian era would be too manifestly unfit.

Let us confine our darkness to the period between the fifth century and the eleventh. It will be all the more opaque for this concentration. And then, pulling down the shades before and behind, let us try to realize how dark the darkness really was. I shall ask you to plunge with me into the very thick of it. We are at the Frankish

court in the eighth century, on a visit to the Palace School. Into this ancient institution of the Franks some new spirit was infused by Charlemagne, who became himself a pupil, having called in Alcuin as a teacher. Here is his opinion (recorded, to be sure, by his master) of the value of a liberal education: "Could anyone really interested in the pursuit and investigation of matters so important to society at large, and truly desirous of practising such excellent virtues, have it in his heart to hazard the daring assertion that our discussion has been in vain? For myself I frankly confess that love of knowledge only has prompted my questions; and I thank you for your kindness in answering them. I highly value the affectionate candor of your replies, and feel convinced that they will be most profitable to all who without prejudice or the blot of envy may sit down and read them."

Today we are not so easily satisfied. At the recent meeting of the National Education Association in Chicago, according to the papers, "high school education throughout the United States was branded as 'generally bookish, scholastic, abstract and inadequate to meet the practical problems of life,' in a report submitted to the national council. . . . The report, based on investigation in twenty-five States, declared the system of high school teaching is just where it was thirty years ago and that this backwardness is due to the plan of high schools to prepare pupils 'for colleges and universities rather than for life.' 'The whole trouble with our high school education,'" declared the reader of the report, "'is that it is regarded too much as merely a preparation for the university. Instead of dealing with the problems of life today, the students are taught to deal with the language, politics and customs of fifteen centuries ago. Nearly all the high

school teachers are college graduates who have no adequate knowledge of affairs outside of colleges. Their teaching is, therefore, bookish, scholastic and abstract. We need a change of aim in high school teaching, a look in the direction of the farm, shop and home. While we do not recommend an education entirely vocational, we urge a departure from the college idea.'"

If we have reason for discontent even now, after so many ages of enlightenment, what must have been the barbarous teaching inflicted on the children of the eighth century? What can they have had to compare with a really modern high school curriculum compounded, let us say, of some English, a little German; a bit of elementary algebra, a sample of plane geometry, some pages of American history, practice in geometrical and free-hand drawing, a good deal of shop-work, lessons in bookkeeping (of a type used only in schools), training in salesmanship, a few hours of botany, physiology, and callisthenics? When Alcuin was a boy, the secular course, in the school he attended, comprised these subjects: grammar, rhetoric, jurisprudence, poetry, astronomy, physics, and explanation of the Old Testament. Alcuin studied also the theology of the New Testament, science, and general literature. If the present-day course is "generally bookish," what shall we call this?

Now let us suppose that the pupil has received his elementary training, bookish or bookless as the case may be, and pushing his studies further, craves admission to the brotherhood of scholars. In our era, as you are all aware, the thing for him to do is to make himself an undisputed authority in some special matter, such as: the art of fishing among the ancient Greeks; the serpent motive in the ancient art of Central America and Mexico; isola-

tion as a criterion of species; the heredity of coat color in mice; some new derivatives of pyromucic acid; the origin of the stratified rocks of the New York series; the ways and means of making payments; reactions of the crayfish to sensory stimuli; the expansion and compressibility of ether and alcohol in the neighborhoods of their boiling points—typical subjects culled at random from a list of the particular fields cultivated at some time by students of distinction at my own university. I say “culled at random.” I should modify that statement. My choice was restricted by the need of picking titles which I could pronounce and you could understand. Now it is not to be imagined for a moment that the cultivator of any one of these gardens has ever tasted the fruit of any other—that the man who fishes among the ancient Greeks knows anything about the ways and means of making payments, or that the experimenter in the compressibility of alcohol can divine the serpent motive in Central American art. No. Each keeps strictly to his own domain. The one, blind to the reactions of the crayfish, limits his diet to new derivatives of pyromucic acid; the other, heedless of the dangers of isolation as a criterion of species, confines his walks to the stratified rocks of New York. Was it thus, say, in the seventh century? Quite the contrary. To be a scholar in those remote times, one had to know all of these subjects, or the things whose places they have taken — studies of corresponding difficulty and importance. Look at St. Isidore's *Origins*: not a work of genius, by any means, but a specimen of the kind of erudition a Dark-Age man was expected to possess, if he wanted to be regarded as a master. The twenty books of that work treat of: grammar; rhetoric and dialectics; mathematics; medicine; laws and times; ecclesiastical books and services; God, the

angels, and religious orders; Church and sects, with a discussion of pagan gods; laws and societies; miscellaneous lexicographical material; man and portents; animals; the world and its parts; the earth and its parts; building and fields; stones and metals; agriculture; war and sports; ships, buildings, clothes; food and implements. But (you will say) all of this information is second-hand, most of it is superficial, much of it is false; it is better to find out something fresh and true about the heredity of coat color in mice than to burden one's mind with a mass of heterogeneous and doubtful learning. Yet I ask: is it? From the point of view of science, regarded as an end in itself, you are probably right—altho I may remark here that the accusation of inaccuracy is a dangerous stone for the scholarship of one age to throw at that of another: who can tell how the results of all our "original research" will look to the learned world a thousand years hence? From the standpoint of the state, on the other hand, the best gift anyone can bestow is that of a judicious, well-rounded citizen, fully informed in the soundest learning his age can give. And in the interest of the individual, is not breadth of understanding about as important as anything? I wonder whether there is to be found, among the monarchs of the world today,—or even among the presidents,—one who could translate a difficult philosophical work from Latin into the vernacular. Yet this was done by a ninth-century English king who surely left nothing to be desired on the score of efficiency.

Let us turn back to Charlemagne, one of whose biographers tells us that the great king "was ever learning, and fond of learning; no subject came amiss to him; everything from the most commonplace everyday occurrences to the profoundest philosophical and theological

inquiries interested him. The price of commodities; the stocking and planting of farms; the building of houses, churches, palaces, bridges, fortresses, ships, and canals; the course of the stars; the text of the Scriptures; the appointment of schools; the sallies of wit; the hair-splitting subtleties of metaphysics; the unknown depths of theology; the origins of law; the reason of usage in the manner and life of the nations; their traditions in poetry, legend, and song; the mysterious framework of liturgical forms; musical notation; the Gregorian chant; the etymology of words; the study of languages; the flexion of verbs; and many more topics. . . . He spoke Latin as fluently as German, and had a fair knowledge of Greek. Einhart says that 'he spent much time and labor with Alcuin in the study of rhetoric, dialectics, and astronomy, learned arithmetic, and with eager curiosity and intelligent scrutiny applied himself to the investigation of the motions of the heavenly bodies.'

Einhart relates further: "After a long absence the most victorious Charles returned into Gaul, and caused the children, whom he had left with Clement as his pupils, to be brought before him. He required them to be examined, and was amazed at the commendable progress of the poorer class of children, whose written productions were most creditable to them. On the other hand, those of illustrious parentage showed very poor specimens of their skill. He then set the good scholars on his right, and the bad on his left, saying: 'I praise you much, dear children, for your excellent efforts, and desire you to continue so that you may attain unto perfection; then I intend to give you rich bishoprics, or splendid abbeys, and shall ever regard you as persons of merit.' Then he turned in anger to those on his left, who trembled at his frowns and the sound of

his voice, which resembled the roll of thunder, as he cried out to them: ‘Look here, ye scions of the best nobility, ye pampered ones, who, trusting to your birth or fortune, have disobeyed me, and instead of studying, as you were bound and I expected you to do, have wasted your time in idleness, on play, luxury, or unprofitable occupation.’ He then took his accustomed oath, and with uplifted head and arm, said in a voice of thunder: ‘By the king of heaven, let others admire you as much as they please; as for me, I set little store by your birth or beauty; understand ye and remember it well, that unless you give heed speedily to amend your past negligence by diligent study, you will never obtain anything from Charles.’”

Imagine, if you can, one of our college presidents or trustees, or a governor at Commencement, “taking his accustomed oath” and addressing the “swells” and “sports” in such a style as this—and promising “rich bishoprics and splendid abbeys” to the “greasy grinds”! Why, we ourselves, the official advocates of study, generally feel constrained to express our admiration of it in deprecatory terms. How often is it dinned into our ears that scholastic success is no test of real ability, that the men most useful in after-life are those who scorn to devote themselves to books! Yet Charlemagne was no mere academic theorist. Contrast with his attitude the supercilious *pôse* so prevalent today—prevalent among adults, and still more among children. Has the world ever seen a more completely self-satisfied being than an empty-headed American high school pupil? Here is an interesting bit from the notes of a recent English traveler in our country, who had been visiting one of our institutions of learning: “I had formed no theory as to the value of some of the best juvenile education in the Eastern States. But I had

learned one thing. I knew the secret of the fine, proud bearing of young America. A child is not a fool; a child is almost always uncannily shrewd. And when it sees a splendid palace provided for it, when it sees money lavished on hygienic devices for its comfort, even upon trifles for its distraction, when it sees brains all bent on discovering the best, nicest ways of dealing with its instincts, when it sees itself the centre of a magnificent pageant, ritual, devotion, almost worship, it naturally lifts its chin, puts its shoulders back, steps out with a spring, and glances confidently upon the whole world. Who wouldn't?"

There is a supreme type of self-complacency which is born of sheer ignorance, an ignorance so absolute as to be unaware of the existence of anything to learn. And this self-complacency, I have already said, is not confined to school-children: it is shared by old and young. It may be called the dominating spirit of our time. One of its marks is a contempt for thorough knowledge and a profound distrust of anyone who is really well-informed. An expert opinion on any subject becomes valueless the moment we learn that it emanates from a "college professor." When a conspicuously competent person is suggested for public office, the most damning accusation that can be hurled at him is the epithet "academic." Few, indeed, can bear up under the suspicion of actually knowing something.

A very serious college paper publishes an article by an evidently earnest young man who maintains that scholarship is essentially narrow and selfish; the really generous student is he who works, not for the cultivation of his own mind, but for the glory of his college. As if a college could derive glory from anything but the fulfilment of its proper mission, the cultivation of the individual minds

entrusted to it! The altruistic tone assumed by devotees of college amusements is peculiarly irritating. I am willing that children should make mud pies: it is their nature to. But when they begin to declare that they are making mud pies, not for their own delectation, but for the embellishment of their city, it is time they were sent on errands for their mother. Students are always ready to do anything but study. Study is hard and distasteful, because our boys and girls have never been used to mental concentration; any other activity, whether it be athletics or "social service," seems to them less painful, hence more profitable. You are all aware how dangerous it is to assume, on the part of our college classes, any definite knowledge of any subject. Last year I had occasion to question a good many students about our friend Charlemagne; and one after another unblushingly assigned him to the eighteenth century. A colleague in a "fresh water" college could find no one in his class who knew what event is celebrated on the fourth of July. In a course in French literature, taken mainly by Juniors, a request to compare a certain drama with *Othello* drew forth the admission that a considerable part of the class knew nothing of Shakspere's play. "We had *Hamlet*," they cried, as if Shakspere were a disease from which one attack made them immune. Of course it had never occurred to them that anyone could be so mad as to read a book not prescribed. You must have noticed how very difficult it has become for college students not only to write but to read their mother tongue. We give them books to study, and the boys, for the most part, obligingly plow thru them, for they are good fellows; but they are no wiser after than before. The text has conveyed nothing to them, because they do not know the meaning of common English words.

It is not to be supposed (let me say once more) that this vast and growing ignorance is peculiar to school and college. It pervades society. Even the teacher and the author are coming under its sway. Men of note are losing the power to speak or write their own language. This subject was tellingly discussed by our last year's president, and I need not dwell upon it.

The confusion of tongues, however, is not the only plague fostered by darkness. Ignorance, having no means of comparison, necessarily lacks a criterion, and is therefore an easy prey to specious fallacy. It runs after every novelty that for the moment appeals to its rudimentary imagination. At what previous age in the history of mankind has there been such a cult of the absurd as we see today? In art, literature, music, science, history, psychology, education, religion, politics, the charlatan is sure of a congregation, provided his antics be sufficiently startling and grotesque. In the field of humor Washington Irving yields to Mutt and Jeff. In religion, we see flourishing sects whose very names seem like a blasphemous caricature. New schools of psychology are busily explaining the noted characters of fiction in the light of arbitrary and eccentric physiological theories. Musicians vie with one another in noisy cacophony. Of one of the latest of the sowers of discord an up-to-date critic says: "In his earlier years he wrote music which was thoroughly clear and understandable, though of no special value. Then, I surmise, he decided to draw attention to himself forcibly by producing things of that wild extravagance which he is now putting forth. It was a sort of artistic lie. But there are plenty of persons who, if they tell lies long enough, will actually end by implicitly believing them to be the truth. That is —'s case. He has come to

believe so implicitly in his own artistic lie that he now lies with absolute sincerity. He wants to be a revolutionist for the sake of being one." Of how many of our one-day prophets can the same thing be said! Our critic goes on to describe a composition by this artist: "It was music which sounded something like what you might expect if you placed a child at the piano and allowed him to pound as he wished. Do not imagine I say this because I am not modern in my sympathies. There are few who are more so than I. The unhappy consequence of all this is that —— has founded a school and has a number of disciples who try to ape his style without possessing his musical knowledge. And it so stands that anybody will soon be able to write music, and however impossible the things may turn out, they will be seriously accepted as such."

In art, the Impressionists have long since been succeeded by the Post-Impressionists, the Futurists, and the Cubists. The Futurists, according to their own definition, "stand upon the extreme promontory of the centuries; and why should they look behind, when they have to break in mysterious portals of the Impossible." "To admire an old picture," they say, "is to pour our sensitiveness into a funeral urn, instead of casting it forward in violent gushes of creation and action." "We stand," they declare, "on the summit of the world, and cast our challenge to the stars." "We must destroy in sculpture, as in every art, the traditional nobility of marble, and bronze also must go. The sculptor can and must employ twenty different substances, such as glass, wood, cardboard, cement, horsehair, leather, wool, mirrors, electric light, and concrete. In the straight lines of a match there is more truth and beauty than in all the muscular contortions of the Laocoön." One of the pro-

ducts of this school is thus described: "Today at the Salon d'Automne I have seen a Futurist sculpture group, and a most extraordinary achievement it is. It does not fulfil all the demands of the new art, for it is in the medium of plaster, and there were no signs of such adventitious adornments as horse-hair, mirrors, electric lights, and so on. I should judge that it is intended to represent a group of wrestlers, but I speak humbly and under correction; it may have been intended for a battle-field or a surgical operation. It is a medley of arms and legs, flowering, so to speak, from a single torso. No head was visible. It is the principle of the cinematograph applied to sculpture." "Futurism," says an English journal, "is nothing but a Latin Quarter escapade. But it is none the less a symptom of the age. . . . It is the cult of violence for its own sake. It finds a motor-car more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace. . . . It is the art of an age which is turning to irrationalism in politics as in metaphysics." I remember examining, a few years ago, a pretentious Italian periodical devoted to Futurism. Its battle-cry was "Down with everything!" It would be satisfied with nothing short of the overthrow of all existing institutions and the creation of a brand-new society and art. Especially were museums and libraries to be consigned to utter destruction. The publisht specimens of the new art, which thus modestly offers itself as more than a substitute for all that has been, make one quite content to die before the Futurist future dawns.

Of the Cubists an ordinarily sedate critic has this to say: "In this Autumn Salon, the snobbery of a few good souls has been pleased to group morose and maniac geometers with delirious dyers, crazily covering their defenceless canvases with color puddles and diagrams which you

would say had been traced by some demented Bouvard and Pécuchet. One of the most unformed daubs of this Salon is dedicated: ‘To mariners, travellers, and mountebanks.’ Taking into account the foreigners, cranks, and humbugs who are the main originality of this Salon—in which ‘French’ taste was to be renewed—we wonder the organizing committee did not choose this ‘symbolic and synthetic’ picture for its poster.” Here is a description of a picture named “Mountaineers attacked by Bears,” and dated “Annecy 1911—Paris 1912”: “If I guess the rebus aright, then you must make out in this picture’s tangle not only the episode of its title, but the route from Annecy to Paris, railway and bridges, telegraph wires, and the compartment in which the painter sat during his journey, and the house in which he lives, as well as the mountain site where the wicked bears attacked the poor travellers—and the gun they used for their defence. Of bears and mountaineers, of road and landscape, only unformed morsels and scattered bits, thrown and cut about at random, remain, so that the mother bear herself would no more recognize her little ones than her victims.”

Concerning Post-Impressionism an expert tells us: “The essence of Post-Impressionism is to distrust or to scorn all tradition, and the diligence with which this distrust or scorn is being expressed by faithful adherence to a new tradition makes one wonder if the attraction may not be, not the principles of the school, but the short cut it seems to offer to art.” It is no doubt true that many of the senseless fads in all branches of mental activity are due, in their inception, to the over-abundance of respectable mediocrity, an abundance which leaves little chance of recognition to the man of unbounded ambition but moderate endowments, unless he can invent some glaring extra-

vagance to make himself conspicuous. But his trumpeting would avail nothing, were it not for the dense ignorance of his public. Lack of knowledge means lack of judgment, and lack of judgment feeds the pretender. It is easier to make a big stench than a sweet fragrance; and the fouler the odor, the more inclined are the incompetent to sniff rapturously and ejaculate: "How strong!" Listen to Frederic Harrison on *The Cult of the Foul*: "The new craze under which we are now suffering is the Cult of the Foul, or to put it in Greek, it may be dubbed Aischrolatreia—worship or admiration of the Ugly, the Nasty, the Brutal. Poetry, Romance, Drama, Painting, Sculpture, Music, Manners, even Dress, are now recast to suit popular taste by adopting forms which hitherto have been regarded as unpleasing, gross, or actually loathsome. To be refined is to be 'goody-goody'; gutter slang is 'so actual'; if a ruffian tramp knifes his pal, it is 'so strong'; and if on the stage his ragged paramour bites off a rival's ear, the halfpenny press screams with delight. Painters are warned against anything 'pretty,' so they dab on bright tints to look like a linoleum pattern, or they go for subjects to a thieves' kitchen. The one aim in life, as in Art, is to shock one's grandmother."

Does all this signify that we are more vicious, more depraved than our fathers? Are we witnessing a violent reaction against accepted canons of decency in life? I do not think so. It does not seem to me that the general moral conduct of the community is worse than it has been before. If art, letters, dress are more indecent, it simply means that we are more ignorant. By our neglect of the past we have cut ourselves off from standards of all kinds, and hence, like the new-born moth, are attracted by the first glare. Dante had a word to say on this theme, many

centuries ago: "Just as the man who has lost the sight of his bodily eyes has to depend on others for the distinction of good and bad, so he who possesses not the light of discrimination always follows after the shout, be it true or false. . . . Thus these blind people, who are wellnigh countless, resting their hands on the shoulders of lying guides, fall into the ditch, from which they cannot escape. It is especially men of the people who are bereft of the light of judgment, because, taken up from the beginning of their life with some trade, they are obliged so to concentrate their minds on it that they think of naught else. And inasmuch as the habit of any virtue, moral or intellectual, cannot be assumed at once, but must be acquired by practice, and they practise nothing but their handicraft and bestow no care on other things, it is impossible for them to have judgment. . . They should be called sheep, not men. For if one sheep should throw itself over a high cliff, all the others would go after it."

This is a passage to be meditated by our professional educators. There was a time when schools attempted, at least, to cultivate discrimination and to furnish the material on which selection can be founded; but in these days of "vocational training," when pupils are encouraged "to practise nothing but their handicraft," it is, in Dante's words, "impossible for them to have judgment." And it is inevitable that in their blindness they should follow false guides; for the loudest bellow is sure to issue from the windiest prophet, the biggest blaze from those luminaries that would rather be flashlights, and dazzle for one instant, than gleam as modest but permanent stars in the sky. "They that be wise," says a once popular book, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." But

none of this for our Futurists, Post-Futurists, and Neo's of every description. They have all taken as their watch-word the motto of the melancholy jockey in *The Arcadians*:

“A short life and a gay one!”

One is tempted to say that the motto of their disciples is that phrase of Tertullian's: “*Credo quia absurdum.*” But that would not be quite just. They do not believe in folly (as Tertullian, for a quite different reason, did in wisdom) because it is absurd, but because they do not know how absurd it is, and because folly has a louder voice than common sense. Just as, in a crowded street on a rainy day, every wayfarer tries to lift his umbrella above all the others, so every preacher today is trying to raise his utterance to a higher pitch than all his competitors. Only by surpassing shrillness of exaggeration can we get a hearing. We all feel it—the politician on the stump, the clergyman in the pulpit, the professor in the class-room—even the president of a learned society delivering his presidential address: and we all yield more or less to the temptation. If we do not, we are consigned to back seats as “mere teachers,” and get no more attention than an organ-grinder playing *Trovatore*.

By this time it may have occurred to some of you that the Dark Age I am discussing is not the period extending from the fifth to the eleventh century, but a much nearer one. I suggest, indeed, that we alter the *Century* definition to something like this: “The *dark ages*, an epoch in the world's history, beginning with or shortly after the French Revolution, marked by a general extension and cheapening of education resulting in a vast increase of self-confident ignorance. It was induced by the gradual triumph of democracy, and will last until the masses, now

become arbiters of taste and science, shall have been raised to the level formerly occupied by the privileged classes."

It is doubtless true that the aggregate of knowledge, at the present day, is greater than ever before; but it is equally true that the large share-holders in this knowledge are no longer in control. Leadership has been assumed by the untrained host, which is troubled by no doubt concerning its competence and therefore feels no inclination to improve its judgment. The ignorance characteristic of our Dark Age is a supremely self-satisfied ignorance. Ours is, I think, the first period in human history to belie Aristotle's saying, "All men naturally desire to know." Never before were conditions so favorable to the easy diffusion of a false semblance of information. Cheap magazines, Sunday supplements, moving pictures have taken the place of books. Quickly scanned and quickly forgotten, they leave in the mind nothing but the illusion of knowledge. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the number of persons who have received some schooling is more considerable than in any previous century; but this admission must be accompanied by the corollary that the schooling is proportionately ineffective. The more widely education has been diffused, the thinner it has been spread. We have now reached a stage where it seems to be on the verge of reverting to the old system of apprenticeship to a trade. All this is natural and inevitable. It is scarcely conceivable that democracy should ever relinquish its hold. The civilized world is committed to the principle of majority rule, believing that the supremacy of the many results in the greatest good to the greatest number. The masses must come into their inheritance, even if that heritage, in their unskilled hands, bear for a long time but little fruit.

In the early stages of the leveling process, the tendency was to lift the plebs up toward the mental condition of the patricians. Little by little, however, the power of inertia has reverst the movement, and now equalization has come to mean the lowering of the brahmin to the dead level of the intellectual pariah. It is of this "downward revision" of education that I am complaining, not of the great democratic evolution of which it is an unfortunate by-product. We are confronted by a definite evil, which can and must be corrected; otherwise it would be useless to complain at all. How frequently do we hear that the high school diploma, and even the college degree, should be "within the reach of every American boy"! And the strongest tendency in our education today is to put it there. When this dream shall have been realized, the result will evidently be that the degree will be worth nothing to anybody. The Spaniards have a saying that all Basques are noble; so every American, it would seem, should be *ex officio* a Bachelor of Arts. I have often thought that the only way to satisfy the popular demand would be to confer the A. B. on every child at its birth. But we can never make a man a scholar by calling him one. If democracy is to be a success (as we all hope and believe), that end must be reached not by degrading education to the present taste of the lowest part of the demos, but by lifting the demos to a better understanding of the value of learning.

This all-important task has fallen of late into poor hands. The principal of a big high school was discussing with me, not long ago, the wholesale migration of the better class of pupils from public to private establishments. "Parents," he said, "are discovering that their children are getting next to nothing in the public school. Why is it? When I compare the men who taught me, and taught me well,

with the present teachers, who can hardly be said to teach anybody anything, I am puzzled to account for the difference. The older men were really no better scholars than the new ones, and worked no harder. The only explanation I can offer is that the earlier generation knew nothing of pedagogy." What he rashly spoke, many masters are thinking. However, it seems to me that we must, in justice, make a distinction between pedagogy and pseudo-pedagogy. The former exists, altho the latter is so much more in evidence that the name "educator," for many intelligent people, has become a term of opprobrium. While the genuinely serious student of education is still groping, trying to find a spot on which to lay the foundations of a science, a host of pseudo-educators, too un instructed to know any better, are loudly proclaiming themselves sole possessors of the whole secret of the art of teaching. An easy career has been opened to young men not overburdened with wit or learning. Having collected some information about school administration and the history of pedagogical speculation, a set of arbitrary formulas, some bits of dubious psychology, and, above all, an imposing technical vocabulary, they are accepted as prophets by an equally ignorant public, and given control of our schools. A specialist writes in *The Forum*: "For a decade or two we have taught theories rather than children, and the result is that the children have scarcely been educated."

Even worse than empty theorizing is the disposition to cater to the native indolence of the pupil and the foolish indulgence of the parent. Listen to the words of the new president of Amherst College, as reported by the press: "The boy chooses on some special line—the line of vocation, the line of 'snaps,' the line of a certain profession or

the days that will let the student get out of town. What do you get? Any sort of training? None at all. . . . The old classical curriculum believed that if you take certain studies and work them through you'd get out of them the deepest things of human experience." Alas! what does the typical boy or the typical parent or the typical educator care for "the deepest things of human experience"? The phrase has an unpleasant suggestion of the difficult and the unpractical, and to call a study "un-practical" is to damn it to the "lowest hell." What we term "vocational training," being the most "practical" thing of all and offering no considerable difficulty to the pupil (much of it being, in fact, in the nature of play), is now first in favor. It is surely an excellent thing in its place—as a supplement to education or as an apprenticeship for those who must remain uneducated. I believe it is destined to render great service. But let us not make the mistake of calling it "education." It should prepare a boy to succeed in his business; probably it will, when it is better developed. But it affords no more education than is to be derived from the business itself. When we say that "life is a school," we are conscious that our phrase is a figure of speech: "vocational education" is another. Perhaps the worst feature of it is that "vocational" subjects are so apt to be chosen, not from vocation, not with any intention of preparing for a career, but merely for the purpose of avoiding real study.

Not long ago I listened to a shout of triumph from the head of a normal school. "At last," he cried, "we have got the colleges where we want them! They can no longer dictate to us; they must take what we see fit to give. If we say that four years of blacksmithing make a suitable high school curriculum, then they must accept four years

of blacksmithing as a preparation for college." Here we have an absolute *reductio ad absurdum*. We can, of course, open our colleges to smiths, and turn them into smithies; but it is hardly necessary to point out that they will then cease to be colleges, and we shall be left with no higher education at all.

The confusion arising from a new conception of the functions of the state and the school, and from the necessity of providing some kind of training adapted to the needs of all, has given currency to certain fallacies, which it is the duty of the better informed members of society to meet and combat. First of all, let us ask ourselves what should be the purpose of education in a democracy. Should it be solely to fit men and women to perform efficiently their daily economic task? That is, of course, an important function, but it cannot be all. Otherwise progress would become impossible as far as schooling can make it so, and the life of man would hardly differ from that of a horse. If the only object of life is to stay alive, of what use is it to live at all? The ideal of economic efficiency is best realized by a machine. But the individuals we have to deal with are not machines: they are human beings of almost infinite capacities, destined to be citizens and parents. They must be capable of living the life of the spirit, of appreciating the good things in nature, in conduct, and in art; they must be able to cope intelligently with weighty problems of public policy; they must leave behind them descendants who shall be more, rather than less, competent than themselves. The higher we rise in the scale of development, the less conspicuous the purely economic aspect of the individual becomes.

"Let us cut loose from the past," is another favorite cry, "and devote ourselves to the practical issues of the day!"

The past is dead. We will turn our backs upon it, and give ourselves to the living present." How familiar these words have become in the public press and in college papers, and in assemblies of educators! Anything that bears the label of actuality attracts the throng, whether it be on the book-shelf or on the stage, in the public lecture-hall or in the academic class-room. College courses dealing with supposedly practical and contemporary things are as crowded as those which reveal the treasures of the past are deserted. Significant of this mood is the frequency with which we see on a theater program the notice: "Time —the Present." "Only the present is real," say the modernists. On the contrary, say I, nothing is more unreal, more elusive, more fictitious. The time that was present when I began this sentence is now gone by. The present is an illusion: it is a perpetually shifting mathematical line dividing the future, of which (humanly speaking) we know nothing, from the past, of which we know much.

This clamor for the present resolves itself, then, into a demand for the recent past. But where shall we find the demarcation between the recent past and the more remote? At what period of man's existence has there been a break in the continuity of his history? Is there a date since which human experience has had no connection with that which preceded? Search as we may, we shall discover nothing but an endless chain. Today's thoughts and happenings can be understood only in the light of yesterday's, and those only thru their relation to the events of the day before. All the knowledge we possess, save in abstract matters outside the confines of time, is of the past, and the further back we can project our vision, the more comprehensive, the more thoro, the more efficient is that knowl-

edge. The more efficient; and the more practical. For our only guide in affairs public and private is comparison with bygone things. What men shall do is determined by what men have done; what men are to be is revealed by what men have been. Everyone agrees that among all subjects of study none is more essential nor more interesting than human nature.

“The proper study of mankind is man”

is as familiar a quotation as ever. And where is man better to be studied than in his records? Just compare,—in number, in variety, in significance,—the people whom you know in the flesh with those you know thru books. And consider how slight and superficial is our acquaintance with nearly all of those around us, in comparison with the understanding we possess of characters disclosed to us by the masters of history, biography, and fiction. “The reading of all good books,” says Descartes, “is like a conversation with the best people of bygone centuries.”

Let me quote a paragraph from a contributor to one of our leading journals: “Universities are beginning to see that theoretical, or absolute, truth—the sort upon which ideals are founded—is difficult to deduce from a narrow study of actual, contemporary life. Existence examined at close range means loss of perspective. . . . Not only do young men find it hard to project themselves back of the present, but equally hard to pursue any line of thought which has no practical bearings.” Why is it that the study of the past seems irksome to the new generation? It is partly because such study requires concentration and judgment. But a more potent reason is to be found in a false view of life, due to a shallow interpretation of socialism—an idea that humanity is about to take a fresh start,

unhampered by all the influences that have made it. Progress is possible only thru utilization of experience. A child with no parents or other elders to direct it would be an idiot. If each individual had not profited by the successes and failures of his predecessors, we should still be in a state of primeval protoplasm. The present generation calls itself practical. But think of the waste of effort that even partial ignorance of the past entails! We must compute not only the trials and losses that might have been avoided by knowledge of what others have done, but also the labor spent in duplication, in learning lessons and working out results long since accessible to the world.

Another prevalent fallacy, which has found favor even in high quarters, is the belief that for the training of the young one subject is just as good as another. This is surely, on the face of it, an amazing doctrine to promulgate: it runs counter to all tradition and, as far as I am aware, to all contemporary experience. One would think the burden of proof should rest on its confessors. Yet they have offered not a shred of evidence—nothing but bald assertion. And on the basis of this empty vociferation school programs and college admission requirements are overturned. Perhaps our age has furnisht no better example than this of its sheeplike sequacity. We, here present, are nearly all of us teachers, and as competent as anybody to testify in this case; and I venture to say there is not one among us who has not observed, in students who have pursued widely different studies, a corresponding difference in general aptitude. It does not stand to reason that algebra should develop the same faculties as free-hand drawing, or Greek the same as blacksmithing. Probably the greatest divergence in the educational value of studies is due to the varying degree to which they

require concentration, judgment, observation, and imagination. Some occupations can be pursued with tolerable success while the mind is wandering; others, like arithmetic and algebra, demand close and constant attention. Some can be carried on by an almost mechanical process; others, like Greek and Latin, call for continual reasoning and the application of general principles to particular cases. Some exact little of the mind, but much of the eye. Some, restricted to practical realities, make no appeal to the esthetic sense; others, such as literature native or foreign, tend to develop the imagination while awakening appreciation of the beautiful. This, I know, is old-fashioned doctrine; but until we have conclusive evidence to offset our own observation and that of all our ancestors, we shall do well to foster the studies most conducive to the habits we wish to cultivate.

The fallacy just defined is closely related to another, which it has been used to support: namely, the doctrine that all study must be made agreeable to the student. More and more the difficult subjects have been replaced by easier ones, and these have been made easier yet by the extraction of obstacles and the invention of painless methods. Grammarless modern languages, delatinized Latin, simplified mathematics omit the very features that make study valuable. Predigested foods of all sorts have almost deprived our youth of the power to use their own teeth. Amusement is looked for, rather than instruction. "Snap" courses have, indeed, been seriously defended on the ground that even tho they teach nothing tangible, they confer an indefinable something that is better than knowledge. I would not deny that contact with a superior mind may serve as an inspiration; it reveals unsuspected possibilities of culture, and moves the responsive lad to emu-

lation. But if the responsive lad does not follow this impulse, if he wilfully neglects a recognized opportunity, he loses more than he gains. He has begun the acquisition of a vicious habit which will make it harder for him, the next time, to obey the call of duty. We shall not be far wrong in saying that a student who puts nothing into a course gets nothing out of it; and what he gets, in education as in trade, is proportionate to what he gives. We often hear, particularly from those who are not over-successful in imparting information, attractive discourse about "building character." Character is built by effort from within, not by admired but unheeded eloquence externally applied. We are every now and then called upon to admire the self-educated man. But every educated man is self-educated. Our minds as well as our characters are shaped by what we do ourselves, not by what others do for us. The chief benefit of education lies in the effort it demands. If school is to be a preparation for life, it must train the child for the performance of the duties that life has in store for him; it must develop in him the habit of cheerfully and regularly accomplishing irksome tasks. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" is the law of life, and a wholesome law it is. "The joy of work" is a noble phrase, and an excellent maxim if properly understood; but the joy of work must not be confounded with the joy of self-indulgence. In self-indulgence the joy comes first, the pleasure is mainly one of anticipation; and gloom is apt to follow after. Work, for most people, is self-denial; and in self-denial the conditions are reverst: it is the beginning that is painful, and joy comes with the fulfilment. This joy may be far greater than that of self-indulgence, but it is remote from the chooser, who is likely to see only the preliminary

pain. It is natural for all of us since Adam's fall—and particularly for the inexperienced—to choose the immediate pleasure; and this innate tendency it is the business of education to counteract.

"We do not value Knowledge, but Power," shout the educational Cubists, who apparently would make a man foursquare with nothing inside. We must no longer teach a lad that $7 \times 8 = 56$: that is simply knowledge. Let him be aware that somewhere in the library there is a book called an algebra, geometry, or something of the sort, in which such tiresome facts are tabulated: that is Power. When I was a child, we used to write in our copy-books, "Knowledge is Power"; that maxim was held up to us as the fundamental principle of education. And so it is! Furthermore, it holds good for all life, not for school alone. Knowledge is not only the greatest but almost the only source of human power. What makes the success of our Captains of Industry? Clear, full, accurate information concerning the industries to be captained, together with sufficient imagination to conceive audacious plans for captaining them. The same combination of keen imagination with wellnigh exhaustive knowledge in many fields made Napoleon great among generals and statesmen. Among savages, who is the ruler? The Medicine-Man, the only one who knows. I have been told that even among prize-fighters the best is he who knows most of the art of sparring. Of course, knowledge, like anything else, to be valuable must be ready for use. We hear, in fact, a great deal of lamentation over the student crammed full of knowledge which he cannot employ. In the lack of a living specimen, let us assume the potential existence of a student thus crammed. We may go so far as to admit that it is quite within the range of possibility for a man

to possess knowledge for which he will never have any occasion, and also knowledge which he will be unable to utilize when a suitable occasion shall present itself. On the other hand, one thing is certain: a man who does not possess knowledge cannot use it under any circumstances. Our only chance of success lies in acquiring knowledge—as much of it as we can get—and keeping it well dusted, well labelled, well classified. We shall never gain power from vague discourse about unknown or unassimilated facts. What constitutes power? To a certain extent, strength of will. So far as that is a product of education, it can be developt only by the systematic overcoming of obstacles, by resolutely doing the things that lead to the achievement of our object, whether we like them or not. Aside from will-force, power consists in the ability to make swift and accurate comparisons and deductions. But this is manifestly impossible, if we do not know the terms to be compared and the data from which inferences are to be drawn. It is only by dealing with definite truths that judgment can be trained.

Now to retain these truths, to keep them clear and correct, what we need above all is memory. And meinory (alas!) is even more discredited than knowledge. It is, indeed, scarcely ever called by its simple name, being customarily cited, in alliterative disparagement, as “mere memory.” The criticism of instruction that we oftenest hear nowadays is that school-children are “stuffed with facts,” to the detriment of Power. I should like to know what these facts are. For nearly thirty years I have been vainly trying to find some of them. The conclusion has been forced upon me that this denunciation is a heritage from a more primitive age, when children really were taught facts, and when memory was not left in an

embryonic state. The truth is that memory and imagination, the two most important human faculties, are scarcely cultivated at all. There was a time when mnemonic exercises were in vogue, when the development of a quick, sure, retentive memory was thought to be one of the principal duties of the schoolmaster. That time has gone by; and the disastrous results of its passing are everywhere apparent. It is pitiful to see the agonies that the ordinary college student has to suffer, if he is obliged to learn anything outright. It is amazing to see how readily he forgets the things which he is told and which, for the moment, he apparently understands. "Knowledge," says Dante, "does not consist in having heard, without remembering." What is the use of all our endless lecturing, of our long assignments of "outside reading," if the pupil's mind retains nothing but confused and mainly erroneous impressions? Memory is, indeed, the very basis of all knowledge, and therefore of nearly all human power. The main difference between a wise man and a fool is that the one remembers, the other forgets. And memory, unlike some of our attributes, depends largely upon training for its efficiency.

The great tragic poet Alfieri has described his experience at the Academy of Turin as "eight years of uneducation." "Uneducation," a natural fruit of our present pedagogical theories, is perhaps the principal cause of our intellectual darkness. Only when the educator shall have been educated, the air cleared of noxious fallacies, and a sound and virile conception of learning restored, will the reign of Humbug come to an end. Not until then will light begin to dawn on our Dark Ages.